

**Opening Remarks of Chairman Henry J. Hyde
Before the Full Committee on
“An Around-the-World View of Public Diplomacy”**

**Thursday, November 10, 2005, 10:30 a.m.
Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building**

Ms. Hughes, we are very pleased to have you with us today. As is the case with many who appear before this Committee, you bring impressive credentials to your task, but very rarely do I have the pleasure of saying to an Administration official of either party that he or she appears to be ideally suited for his or her position.

The subject of this hearing is the state of U.S. public diplomacy, specifically what can be done to arrest, and hopefully reverse, the sharp rise in anti-American sentiment around the world. Allow me to offer some brief comments that may differ from prevailing opinions on the subject.

The idea that the widespread and growing hostility to the United States emerges from an unfamiliarity with our country defies logic. For most of the last century, American popular culture has saturated the world to such an extent that we are routinely accused of cultural imperialism, with foreign governments able to erect only feeble barriers against the onslaught. Decades of American television, from “I Love Lucy” to “American Idol,” and thousands of movies, from “The Wizard of Oz” to “Rocky,” to say nothing of virtually every other aspect of life in the U.S., have ensured that, even in the most remote corners of the world, the full array of American life is on display, the good and the bad, the embarrassing and the most noble.

There’s more than a touch of arrogance to this common explanation. A belief that ‘to know us is to love us’ is a surprisingly immature attitude for anyone to profess. It is, in fact, quite possible for people to know us and still dislike us. That’s certainly true on an individual level. To dismiss our detractors as merely being ignorant is a crippling self-delusion.

Often the governments of countries have very significant disagreements with one another, disagreements that resonate with their populations. We see it in our own country. Is the widespread dissatisfaction with France simply the result of ignorance on our part, or do the statements and actions of the French Government and others play a role?

Given that most of the world is familiar with so many aspects of our society, any campaign that focuses on increasing knowledge about the U.S., with its noble ideals, wonderful accomplishments and welcoming tolerance, is unlikely to dispel much hostility. Most of the world, in fact, has been repeatedly exposed to many of our very best attributes. The problem is that many also believe that we are their enemies.

And we are, in plain truth, the enemies of many. Osama bin Laden rightly views us as enemies of his plan to overthrow governments throughout the Middle East and replace them with fanatically anti-Western regimes. And he has a large following in the Muslim world who see our opposition to that vision as that of an enemy. Imperial Japan also saw us as an enemy, not because its leaders were unfamiliar with us and our traditions – Admiral Yamamoto spent many years in the U.S. and strongly admired what he saw – but because we were an impediment to their plans, to their vision of the world.

I do not understand why we are so reluctant to accept the obvious fact that, in crafting our various policies, we are often choosing one group over another, one country's plans over those of its competitor's, and that, therefore, those opposed to our policies are likely to resent and even hate us. How could it be any different?

But not everyone who is opposed to us is unalterably so. Many people have been persuaded that we are their enemies, that our policies do not target them accidentally but do so deliberately. This audience is one on which we must focus much attention and effort.

Around the world, there are many relentless campaigns that depict the U.S. and its policies in the blackest and most threatening terms. Our great failing is that we either do not respond or we respond in so feeble and misdirected a way as to be entirely ineffective. To use an analogy familiar to you: Imagine a political campaign in which an opponent relentlessly paints your candidate in the most outrageous distortions and lies, with endless accusations stretching from criminal activity to moral depravity. If the response is limited to handing out talking points regarding your candidate's accomplishments as an Eagle Scout and his or her love of liberty and worth as a person, Election Day is unlikely to be a pleasant one.

Thus, to have any hope of reversing our downward slide, we must begin by abandoning the comforting belief and easy solution that our problems stem from the world not knowing us, that if everyone only knew us, they then would love us. Unless we do so, we cannot hope to understand the rapid growth of hostility over the past few years other than by attributing it to mass amnesia.

Instead, we must accept that large numbers who dislike us do so because they believe that we have *chosen* to be their enemy and that our policies have that as their intent. Many have been persuaded of our hostility or had their suspicions and biases sharpened by others in the media

and elsewhere who, motivated by an intent to slander or clouded by simple misinformation, peddle an image of conscious malice on our part. Given this reality, the most important task facing us is to accept that we have done far too little to counter this daily blackening, that the fault is ours, not theirs.

Central to our plans must be a determination to engage our audiences – and not just the elites – with a persuasive case for our policies. Let me emphasize the critical distinction again. We must make a persuasive argument for our *policies* and not just for us as a people and a country.

We cannot hope to win over our audience by trying to persuade them to change, by preaching to them, by outlining our vision for them, however hopeful. We can only do so by explaining and defending our own positions, our own policies, what it is that we are in fact trying to accomplish.

No magic bullet has yet been found. Those whose recommendations focus on reorganizations of the bureaucracy often greatly overestimate the possible beneficial results. We can certainly do better, but when is that ever not the case? Regardless of however imaginatively done, this can be only a small part of what must be a much broader effort. Our Foreign Service, however superbly trained and motivated, can never be expected to counter a deluge of televised images and fiery commentary. How would the Foreign Service have fared in the campaign between Bush and Kerry? Why then should we expect them to perform miracles in Egypt or Indonesia?

Nor is more money the answer. Doing more of what we've been doing for decades will not produce useful results. Shortwave radio has a glorious past, but a bleak future. Satellite television and other means of communication represent the way forward, but most of these remain largely *terra incognita*. Similarly, stories on life in America may be heartwarming for expatriates, but these can do little to change the minds of those set against us.

Instead, what we need is a permanent campaign aimed at the minds of our estranged audiences. A combative, aggressive, fully engaged *political* campaign, one that directly counters assertions and distortions by presenting a convincing case for what we're doing, for countering our enemies' assertions and lies, and proving our case. Preaching to our foreign audiences, trying to get them to change, to live up to our ideals, is fatally misconceived and directs our attention and energies toward ends of limited effect. We are very unlikely to win them over by outlining our vision of what we want them to become. Our only real hope to convincingly explain our own policies and how these either help, or do not hurt, them.

And that effort must embrace not merely all of the standard and worthy elements of public diplomacy, such as student exchanges and citizen ambassadors, but the sustained attention of those at the top levels of our government, from the President on down. He most of all must be directly engaged in addressing our target audiences and convincing them that our policies have been crafted to achieve certain goals, that we do have reasonable purposes and plans, and that the dark visions of us filling the airwaves are lies.

That is why I believe you are ideally suited for this position. You have done this very thing for many years, and done it successfully. And you have the ability to draw in the highest levels of our government. I doubt that we can ask for better. We certainly cannot reasonably expect more.